

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 069654
ORIGIN AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CPR-01 CU-02 SS-15 EB-08 SY-05
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY

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STADIS/////////////////////////////////
FROM AF/C

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP (BONGO, OMAR), GB, US

SUBJECT: REPORTED U.S. PRIVATE INVITATION TO BONGO

REF: LIBREVILLE 0760

1. PRESIDENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS COUNCIL, DR.
ELLIOT SKINNER, PHONED ASST. SECY. SCHAUFLE ON MARCH 25
TO INFORM HIM OF POSSIBLE INVITATION. IT WAS NOT UNTIL
MARCH 29, HOWEVER, THAT AF/C WAS ABLE TO REACH DR. SKINNER
BY PHONE TO OBTAIN FURTHER DETAILS.

2. ACCORDING TO SKINNER, PLANS STILL VERY ROUGH. HE IS
THINKING IN TERMS OF MAY TIMING BUT NO FIRM DATES HAVE
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BEEN SET. PLANS CALL FOR 1-2 DAYS IN NEW YORK DURING
WHICH BONGO WOULD MAKE AT LEAST ONE SPEECH ON BROAD
AFRICAN ISSUES (ESPECIALLY NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC
ORDER), POSSIBLY ADDRESS UN IF IT IS IN SESSION, AND MEET
U.S. BUSINESSMEN QUOTE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING GABON'S
RESOURCES UNQUOTE. THEN TWO DAYS IN WASHINGTON WHERE
BONGO WOULD ADDRESS MEETING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS

COUNCIL AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY AND POSSIBLY MEET WITH CON-
GRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS. FINALLY, TWO DAYS IN HOUSTON
WHERE HE WOULD RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE FROM TEXAS SOUTHERN
UNIVERSITY AND MEET WITH U.S. OIL COMPANIES INTERESTED IN

GABON.

3. BONGO WOULD BE INVITED IN CONNECTION WITH HIS JUNE
ACCESSION TO CHAIRMANSHIP OF OAU. SKINNER CHARACTERIZED
PURPOSE OF VISIT AS (A) PUTTING GABON ON THE MAP; AND (B)
CHANGING IMAGE OF OAU VIS-A-VIS U.S. POPULATION. AFTER A
BIT OF PROBING, SKINNER ADMITTED THAT INITIATIVE CAME FROM
MELONE (REFTEL), QUOTE ACTING AS PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL
EMISSARY UNQUOTE. THUS IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT BONGO GAVE
MELONE SOME SORT OF MANDATE TO DEVELOP PUBLIC IMAGE PRO-
GRAM IN U.S. AND THAT ABOVE REPRESENTS FRUITS OF HIS
EFFORTS SO FAR.

4. SKINNER WAS UNAWARE OF BONGO'S VISIT TO U.S. IN MARCH
AND LIKELY RETURN VISIT IN SEPTEMBER. IN LIGHT OF THIS
INFORMATION HE SPECULATED THAT BONGO MAY DECIDE POSTPONE
ENTIRE PROGRAM TO COINCIDE WITH SEPTEMBER VISIT. HE WOULD
IN ANY EVENT AWAIT BONGO'S REACTION THROUGH MELONE AND
THROUGH GABONESE EMBASSY WASHINGTON WHICH HAS ALSO BEEN
INFORMED OF PROPOSED PROGRAM.

5. ON BEHALF OF DEPT, WE OFFERED PROVIDE APPROPRIATE
COURTESIES AND ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF TRIP, BUT RULED
OUT POSSIBILITY OF MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER IN MAY.
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SKINNER EMPHASIZED PRIVATE NATURE OF INVITATION, BUT THANK-
ED US AND AGREED TO STAY IN TOUCH.

6. AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS COUNCIL IS REPUTABLE WASH-
INGTON-BASED, AID-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS SPON-
SORED STUDIES, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS BOTH IN U.S. AND
IN AFRICA. DR. SKINNER IS COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR
AND FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO UPPER VOLTA.

7. COMMENT: MELONE'S PROJECT APPEARS TO SERVE SOME GEN-
ERAL PURPOSE AS BONGO'S MARCH VISIT TO U.S. IT MAY BE
THAT BONGO GAVE MELONE AN ASSIGNMENT TO PLAN TRIP ALONG
THESE LINES BUT, WITH CHARACTERISTIC IMPATIENCE, WENT
AHEAD AND DID IT HIMSELF.
CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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